

Restructuring ISR, a Roadmap for the Future 36-9594

The current AF/A2 has stated that no “specific domain can or should lay claim to a monopoly on the Air Force’s ISR mission.”¹ However, throughout the entire Department of Defense (DoD) exist intelligence organizations that are expertly operating within their own domains. The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) himself has placed such a high value and importance on an integrated Intelligence Community that he has made it one of three areas essential to success within his National Intelligence Strategy vision statement.² Other redundant high-level documents recently published share the main theme of consolidation and enhanced cooperation of intelligence organizations for the greater good of the nation and its national security. Recent reorganizations within the Air Force make this an opportune time to realign intelligence organizations to maximize their capabilities and encourage cross-domain coordination. The National Security Agency (NSA), Air Force Space Command (AFSPC), the National Reconnaissance Organization (NRO), and the Air Force Intelligence Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Agency (AFISRA) each have a piece of the ISR mission. This paper will focus on these separate organizations and show correlations between them, explain how these ISR-focused organizations could be realigned, and thereby provide the biggest “hurdles” to overcome to guarantee a successful merger.

The Director of the NSA (DIRNSA) is tri-hated. In addition to being the DIRNSA, he is also the Director of the Joint Functional Component Command for Network Warfare (JFCC-NW) and the Director of the Central Security Service (CSS). His CSS role provides him the authority to functionally operate over each of the services’ SIGINT collection organizations. AFISRA, and its subordinate wings, are one of the Air Force SIGINT collection organizations. On 23 Dec 71, the DoD prescribed authorities and responsibilities of the NSA and the CSS by publishing DoD Directive 5100.20.³ This document solidified the relationship between the CSS

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and each of the services SIGINT organizations by establishing a Service Cryptologic Component (SCC) within each service that collect SIGINT. In short, the SCC is the commander of the organizations that are collecting intelligence through SIGINT means. Therefore, the AFISRA/CC is also the DIRNSA's Air Force SCC. President Reagan further outlined the NSA's responsibilities when he signed Executive Order 12333. In addition to specifying the broad functions of the NSA, this document highlights that "no other department or agency may engage in signals intelligence (SIGINT) activities except pursuant to a delegation by the Secretary of Defense."⁴ Because of this document, it appears President Reagan appreciated the significant capabilities of the NSA and the need to protect against possible violations of civil liberties and privacy. Additionally, this document further solidifies the relationship of the CSS and the separate service SCCs. Interestingly, the new Cyber Command and the NRO also have SIGINT capabilities the DIRNSA oversees. I will draw other correlations of those two organizations later in this paper. In addition to SIGINT, the NSA also serves as STRATCOM's Joint Functional Component Command for Network Warfare (JFCC-NW). The mission of this organization is to "facilitate cooperative engagement with other national entities in computer network defense and network warfare as part of global information operations."⁵ The 24th Air Force, co-located with the AFISRA at Lackland AFB, is the Air Force unit supporting this new "cyber" domain and mission.

The AFISRA falls directly under the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff (DCS) for ISR as a Field Operating Agency. Lt Gen Deptula is the current DCS for ISR, and his vision of the activation of AFISRA is to transform intelligence into a "pre-eminent military intelligence organization with the most respected personnel and the most valued ISR capability."⁶ Lt Gen Deptula has made it known that his goal is to manage ISR from a capabilities based perspective

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instead of an air domain aspect.⁷ The AFISRA commander reinforces this paradigm shift by stating, “we must focus on how we achieve and assess effects...not where.”⁸ AFISRA’s structure provides a single commander the control over the “means” and the “analysis” of information collected.⁹ This change is significant and if AFISRA is successful, they may serve as the organizational role model for further integration of other intelligence organizations. Interestingly, AFISRA has transformed from a purely SIGINT focus to operating other intelligence disciplines such as Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT), Scientific and Technical Intelligence (S&TI), and Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT).¹⁰ Some individuals believe that ISR is becoming so important, and integrated, to support combat operations that it may warrant having its own MAJCOM where ISR is the primary mission.¹¹ It is this suggestion that allows for speculation of how ISR may be organized and integrate in the future. The majority of the SIGINT functions held by the organizational predecessor of the AFISRA, the Air Intelligence Agency, have been transferred to the 24 AF, which is collocated with AFISRA and has recently been aligned under AFSPC.

Effective 1 Dec 09, AFSPC no longer controls the nation’s nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles force.¹² This significant mission shift is causing AFSPC to find its new organizational characteristics, culture, and mission-set that it will provide the warfighter. The Air Force Cyber Command (AFCYBER) has reorganized into the 24 AF and is now one of the two subordinate numbered air forces under AFSPC. “These two developments [in AFSPC] are definitely steps in the right direction of effects-based organization.”¹³ The day-to-day operation of 24th AF falls directly under the purview of the JFCC-NW, which falls under the control of the DIRNSA. In addition to the 24th Air Force, AFSPC also has another numbered Air Force called the 14th Air Force. The mission of 14th AF is “to control and exploit space for global and theater

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operations.” Additionally, 14th AF provides operational plans and missions for Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) and their subordinate components and is the Air Force Component to U.S. Strategic Command for space operations.¹⁴,”

When AFSPC was activated in 1982, it took control of some ISR platforms that operate in the space domain to include space surveillance and early warning. Both of these functions falls directly under the 14 AF. The Air Force DCS for ISR has stated that from a domain neutral aspect, these two capabilities are both surveillance.¹⁵ An additional mission of the 14AF is to “provide surveillance, tracking, and intelligence of more than 9,000 man-made objects ranging from active and inactive satellites to vehicle fragments, using a variety of sensors such as phased-array radars and optical surveillance systems.”¹⁶ Therefore, from this mission statement, it seems they are the guardians of information and intelligence collection within the domain of space. This mission statement is consistent with AFSPC trying to maintain a foothold as the command that “does all things space”, however AFSPC is in danger of minimizing itself if it continues this emphasis.¹⁷ It is this domain centric belief that prevents AFSPC from reaching its full potential of serving the cause of national defense. Recently though, the commander of AFSPC is working to fix the fundamental cultural problem by stating, “it’s about delivering effects, it’s not about just flying satellites.”¹⁸ The 14th and 24th AF with their subtle affiliation with the NSA provides a compelling argument that the current AFSPC mission could shift from that of a space domain of operation to that of a space based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission. In fact, the 14AF mission and the satellites they operate have some similarities with the space-based satellites the NRO operates.

The NRO currently reports directly to the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense and it was covertly created to be an agile acquisition organization that

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could quickly field new space-based systems vital to national defense.¹⁹ It is one of the 16 intelligence agencies of the Intelligence Community (IC). However, the 2001 Space Commission Report suggested that the SecDef and the IC “has not given the national security space program their sustained, joint attention for nearly a decade.”²⁰ The report further suggests the IC “align their respective staff offices so that coordination on intelligence issues broadly, and space matters specifically, is easier and more direct.”²¹ Additionally, the report suggested the NRO is operationally inhibited by the requirement to maintain previous purchases of legacy systems. Because of these findings, the NRO is losing a significant amount of its operability and may be losing its place as the premier clandestine organization focused on employing new capabilities in space.²² Now may be the best time for the NRO to realign under a single command whose mission could better focus on their specific space-based ISR-type missions they perform.

This new proposed organizations would be able to effectively integrate the systems in each of the domains to maximize the information provided to the national leadership, IC, and the Geographic Combatant Commanders. While AFSPC is trying to “ride-out” the turbulence of its recent changes, now may be the best time for it to reorganize and become the sole ISR command by absorbing all ISR organizations under this single MAJCOM. This reorganization would place a greater emphasis on the full spectrum domain where ISR may be collected and interpreted. Most importantly, ISR would have one single organization that will be a proponent and advocate for new acquisitions. If this proposed reorganization occurs, the new structure would consist of a new ISR focused MAJCOM with four main subordinate units: 24 AF (Cyber/SIGINT/OSINT), NRO (MASINT/SIGINT), AFISRA (SIGINT/MASINT), and 14 AF (traditional space launch and monitoring and an “enabler” of MASINT/SIGINT). With these primarily intelligence

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gathering and focused organizations, the DIRNSA would need to work closely with the commander of AFSPC to guarantee successful executions of its daily missions. In fact, the AFSPC commander should become the DIRNSA's new SCC. The other intelligence focus areas like MASINT and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) conducted to a lesser extent within the organizations will continue to function as they do today. With the unique capabilities of these organizations, this consolidation would provide the IC and SecDef a fiscally competent organization centered on ISR effects. This new organization would literally become the "cradle to grave" ISR expert for launching, employing, integrating, operating, monitoring, maneuvering ISR assets to collect information and turning it into intelligence for national decision makers. In fact, the US Navy has already accomplished a similar integration by placing its cyber, intelligence, and communication functions under one organization called the "Information Domination Corps." This new organization is co-located with the National Security Agency at Ft Meade, Maryland. Incidentally, the Navy's SCC is the commander of this new organization. The Navy Director of Naval Intelligence said, "the new command won't focus on developing new capabilities but instead better organizing and using existing, data, networks and tools."²³ However, the largest "hurdle" to overcome for the Air Force to overcome with the creation of this new organization will be the budgeting aspect.

For this reorganization to be successful AFSPC must be given full budgetary oversight for each of the organizations. This intelligence budget process is significantly bureaucratic. This bureaucracy originates directly within Congress, all the way down to each organization that receives the National Intelligence Program (NIP) and the Tactical Intelligence and Related Activities (TIARA) budgets.²⁴ The Senate Intelligence Committee has jurisdiction only over the NIP but not the Joint Military Intelligence Program (JMIP) and TIARA. However, the House

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Intelligence Committee and the Senate conduct most of the oversight for the spending and procurement.²⁵ Additionally, “because there is no effective mechanism in Congress for coordinating the different oversight committees, turf wars among intelligence agencies are echoed rather than eliminated at the congressional level.”²⁶ The intelligence budgeting issues were at the center of attention during the 2004 intelligence reform initiatives.²⁷ After the debate, the result was to establish and make the DNI responsible for developing and determining the annual NIP budget, but no changes were made directly within Congress or its oversight committees.

This confusing budgetary process is pertinent to the AFSPC reorganization because for this new organization to be successful and fiscally efficient, it must have unlimited access to all of the budgets that currently operates each organization. Each service understands the importance to give the American taxpayer the most for their money. In fact, “each Quadrennial Defense Review to date has recognized the benefits of ensuring joint efforts are efficiently managed and resourced for effectiveness.”²⁸ However, since Congress has numerous committees and subcommittees with various oversight and appropriations, it would be difficult to convince each of these committees, the IC, and the Department of Defense to funnel money directly to one organization for execution. Only with streamlined Congressional oversight and with assurances that abuse would not take place by the DNI and the DIRNSA, this reorganization could be successful and possible.

In conclusion, consolidating full spectrum ISR under one organization would maximize the capabilities that each organization provides national decision makers. Lt Gen Deptula’s suggestion that ISR should be effects, not domain based is a valid and pertinent argument for reorganization. Each of the “core” ISR organizations discussed in this paper would greatly

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benefit from a more direct and focused attention on their mission by a new command structure. The new command would exercise expertise and understanding of their capabilities and could further enhance those capabilities by creating cross-domain ISR integration. Perhaps the best approach is to follow the lead of the US Navy and jointly work towards the same goal of enhancing the intelligence given to the decision makers. However, integration alone may not successfully fuse the effects of ISR without each organizations commitment to prosper not only as a single entity, but also as a combined organization that sacrifices their individual culture for the good of the nation. The success of this new organization would “hinge” on the budget bureaucracy and restraints enforced by Congress. The IC, as well as any government organization, operate within the purview of its funding and are typically operationally and administratively under the control of who allocates the budget. The Director of NSA has recently pointed out that the leaders during World War II quickly understood that military services cooperation during intelligence gathering is far more effective than operating separately.²⁹ The National Security Act of 1947 “forged unification of armed forces, but it contained built-in inefficiencies, overlaps in functions, and out of balance responsibilities—all of which are too costly to sustain today.”³⁰ However, these ideas need to be taken to the next step. The IC, Congress, and Department of Defense should allow this restructure to occur. With this change, synergies will instill a joint-minded and fiscally responsible approach of consolidating ISR under one organization. Only when this reorganization occurs will the US taxpayer get both the most for their money, and will have a consolidated, agile, and expert Air Force ISR organization that will protect this nation well into this future.

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- ² Director of National Intelligence, “*The National Intelligence Strategy*”, Aug 09, 2
- ³ DODD 5100.20, *The NSA and CSS*, 4
- ⁴ Executive Order 12333 of Dec 4, 1981, (b) (1)
- ⁵ USSTRATCOM “*Snap Shot*”, Mar 09
- ⁶ An Overview of the US Intelligence Community for the 111th Congress
- ⁷ Deptula and Brown, *A House Divided*, Air and Space Journal, 11
- ⁸ Tomme, Emphasizing Effects over Domain, Air and Space Journal, 87
- ⁹ Ibid, 83
- ¹⁰ Air Force Mission Directive 15, AFISRA, 2
- ¹¹ Tomme, Emphasizing Effects over Domain, Air and Space Journal, 83
- ¹² Air Force Global Strike Command Webpage news release
- ¹³ Tomme, *Efficiently Exploiting the Power of CS ISR by Optimally Organizing and Training the Producers of Combat Support Effects*, 61
- ¹⁴ 14th Air Force “*Fact Sheet*”
- ¹⁵ Deptula and Brown, *A House Divided*, Air and Space Journal, 11
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- ¹⁷ Tomme, Emphasizing Effects over Domain, Air and Space Journal, 83
- ¹⁸ Ibid
- ¹⁹ National Reconnaissance Office, “*The Nation’s Eyes and Ears in Space*”, NRO Fact Sheet
- ²⁰ 2001 Space Commission Report, Chapter 5, 65
- ²¹ Ibid
- ²² Tomme, Emphasizing Effects over Domain, Air and Space Journal, 89
- ²³ Navy.mil, *Navy Moves to Meet Information Age Challenges*
- ²⁴ US Intelligence Community, *The Intelligence Budget Process*
- ²⁵ Posner, *Uncertain Shield*, 199
- ²⁶ Ibid, 200
- ²⁷ Ibid
- ²⁸ Deptula, *Toward Restructuring National Security*, 12
- ²⁹ Alexander (DIRNSA) Speech during RSA Conference, 21 Apr 09
- ³⁰ Deptula, *Toward Restructuring National Security*, 15

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